

## The Meaning of Fraternity

When I was initiated into our chapter, the first scroll I received came from Conner Kleiman. He tasked my rush class, as has become customary, to define humility in our own words in slack. I remember being kind of surprised to see this man I had come to know talk so earnestly about something. Recently I signed back into slack and attempted to find what I wrote, in hopes of comparing it with what I would say now. I have been in this fraternity for over two years now and I feel I gain more perspective about myself and life everyday. It was gone.

It doesn't matter what my slack message said. It was a collection of words, on an obsolete platform, deleted after 90 days. That moment seeing all of the empty channels where we once communicated our business flooded me with the sound of frater Ed Robinson, "Not hope, nor joy, nor love, nor fear has left one trace of record here." To see this vessel we had once used as our hub be deserted left me feeling humbled by the human experience in some strange way. Which immediately struck me to write this.

Until now, I would probably tell you that the fraternity means brotherhood and that the fraternity is valuable to *me*. As I grow in thought and experience I now believe the fraternity means being humbled. The fraternity means to be a part of something bigger than you and to function as a unit, to function as not an individual but a *unit*. I have been humbled a lot this year, unfortunately leading me to not seek an officer position in the Student Organization for Sustainability Action, which was my plan as frater Heffer had suggested getting involved outside of TKE. I have definitely had my fair share of problems caused by nothing of my own doing, which is something uniquely challenging and I am still learning to deal with. I think that the fraternity experience has taught me how to face these challenges, and I know I would be nowhere without it.

During my time as Hegemon, I was humbled every Sunday at 6 PM. The rush process seemed so larger than life and immensely complicated when I was a first semester freshman, but to be the one in charge of teaching our new fraters was extraordinarily humbling as it showed me that with dedication, and the support of my brothers, I too can create this atmosphere of mystery and learning. To see these young men take their notes and to feel that I was in their shoes just a few days ago overwhelms me with a sense of passing time. I am well over halfway done with my college and active fraternal experience, and I am immensely different because of it. Each passing day I learn a lesson through my fraternity, making me a better man and getting me closer to fulfillment.

My answer to the question "The Meaning of Fraternity" has changed quite a bit in the last year. I have lived a life of increasing self reflection and humbleness since my last application. I took my initial rejection as a challenge. I knew I was close to something I wanted and I made a goal for myself to be better. I know that as a person and as a frater, I have achieved this goal. I recently was initiated into The Order of Omega, which I believe attests to the leadership I have learned. I am still disappointed that I could not achieve my goal of being more active on campus, but life is filled with challenges, which I have learned first hand this past year. I have also learned that without challenges outside of yourself, you can't grow and become humble.

*"Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less." – Rick Warren*